

The story of Eros
and Psyche :
retold from
Apuleius ;
together with
some early verses

Edward Carpenter

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THE STORY OF EROS & PSYCHE

(RETOLD FROM APULEIUS)

TOGETHER WITH SOME EARLY VERSES

BY

EDWARD CARPENTER



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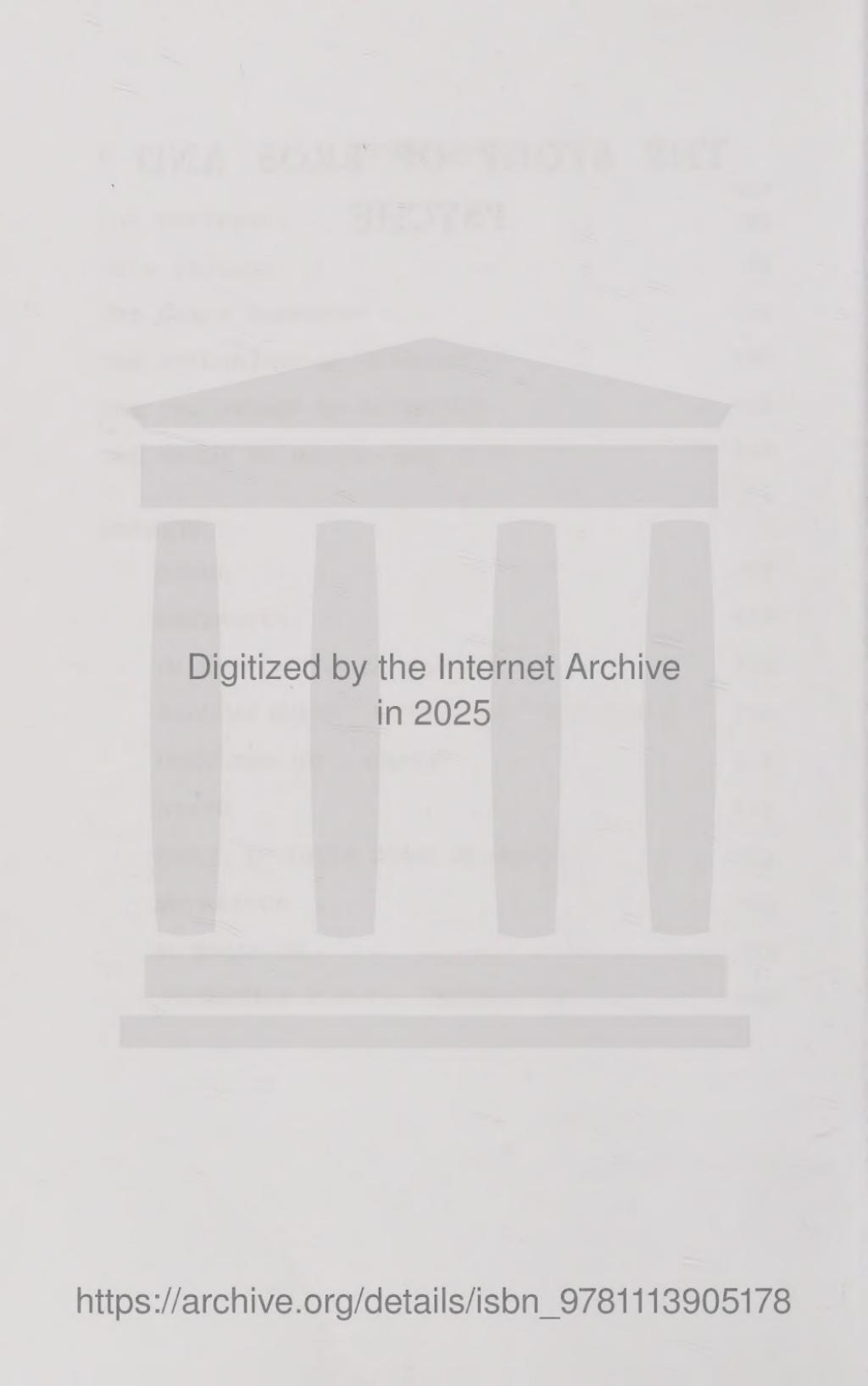
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THE STORY OF EROS AND PSYCHE

The story of Eros and Psyche is one of the most popular and best known legends in all literature, and contains many valuable lessons. It tells us that the love of a man or woman for another, and especially for a person of the opposite sex, is a natural and healthy condition, and that it is good to have such love.

The author of *Roman and Greek Myths* says that the legend of Eros and Psyche is based on an old Greek legend, which was probably written down by some ancient author, and was later translated into Latin by a Roman writer. The legend is as follows: There was once a king named Eros, who had a beautiful daughter named Psyche. One day, while Eros was away on a hunting trip, Psyche went to a nearby lake to bathe. While she was bathing, a fisherman saw her and took her away to his house. The fisherman's wife was jealous of Psyche, and told her husband that she was a very ugly girl. The fisherman believed his wife, and when he returned home, he found Psyche gone. He searched for her everywhere, but could not find her. Finally, he asked the gods for help, and they told him to go to the temple of Venus, where he would find Psyche. The fisherman followed the directions given to him, and found Psyche at the temple. She was still very ugly, but the fisherman fell in love with her anyway. They got married, and lived happily ever after.



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THO' the story of Eros and Psyche is alluded to by various earlier writers, our only source for its details is, I believe, in that animated and amusing romance, the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius; where it occurs as an Episode, and where it is told at considerable length and with elaboration.

Apuleius was a Roman citizen of Madaura in N. Africa, and was born about 130 A.D. He inherited a large sum of money from his father, and after spending much of it in extensive travels, settled down ultimately to a literary life at Carthage, where he was held in great honor. He had an inquiring adventurous turn of mind and character, uniting a thorough enjoyment of life with a tendency to mysticism and oriental speculation (the theosophy of the time), which shows itself in his works. He is said to have been initiated in the 'mysteries' of various religious fraternities.

The story of Eros and Psyche (or Cupid and Psyche as he calls it) probably came to Apuleius thro' Greek channels ; but it seems to be one of those world-old fables to which it is difficult to assign a date or locality, and which owing to some hidden pregnancy of meaning are graciously received in all ages and places. In this respect *Eros and Psyche* may be compared with *Cinderella* and with the *Sleeping Beauty*, to both of which stories it shows considerable resemblance both in detail and meaning

Cinderella the cinder-maiden sits unbeknown in her earthly hutch ;

Gibed and jeered at she bewails her lonely fate ;

Nevertheless youngest-born she surpasses her sisters and endues a garment of the sun and stars,

From a tiny spark she ascends and irradiates the universe, and is wedded to the prince of heaven

To what extent Apuleius may have amplified and elaborated the material that came to him, it would be impossible to say. As a writer he is full of invention, humour, lively wit and varied learning and experience ; but his style is often overloaded and affected ; and the Story as told by him is somewhat involved and laborious in places.

In re-telling the story I have taken the liberty (while adhering to his outlines) of using Greek instead

of Latin names for the divinities, also of cutting down the details and transposing and slightly varying a few items—with the view of rendering the whole more *transparent*, so to speak.

For the conduct of Aphrodite, however, who is represented as ‘bawling’ and brawling in so undignified a way Apuleius is alone responsible!

Here and there I have adopted a phrase from the excellent translation in Bohn’s “Classics.” For the rest, there is a prose paraphrase of the story by Mr. Walter Pater in *Marius*, and one in verse by Mr. Robert Bridges, which may be consulted by those interested in the subject.

As to the “Early Verses” here reprinted with *Eros and Psyche*, they are selected from a small volume entitled *Narcissus and other Poems*, which was published by Henry S. King & Co. in 1873 (i.e. some fifty years ago). I was at that time at Cambridge, and I vividly remember the care and even anxiety with which—following the ideals then and there current—I launched these first attempts

at verse. Nor is it impossible that as specimens of the work of that period they may (notwithstanding their juvenile character) present even now some points of interest.

E. C.

THE STORY OF EROS AND PSYCHE

I

ONCE, in a certain land, there dwelt a King and Queen who had three daughters—the eldest charming for her bodily grace, the second equally charming for her wit and intelligence. Even as children every one admired these two. But as time went on it began to be noised abroad that the third and youngest was after all the fairest of the three. The name of this one was Psyche. She was retiring, shy perhaps, nor had she all the gifts of her sisters ; but it was seen that there was something unearthly in her beauty, some strange light in her countenance which entranced those who gazed upon it. Indeed it was whispered here and there that she was fairer than Aphrodite herself, whom all Nature adores. And some, actually deserting the temples and the service of the foam-born goddess, came and paid their worship to the lovely maiden.

To Psyche herself there was no pleasure in all this. The innocent child thought nothing of her own beauty, nor did she care for the renown and worship it brought her. She longed for Love, but these things only served to make a distance between her and other people, and to make love more difficult. She felt sick and lonely, and when presently her sisters, hearing the common talk, became envious and full of unfriendliness, she felt lonelier than ever. But her fame continued to spread, and at last reached the ears of the great Aphrodite herself.

Now when Aphrodite heard she was very wroth, and hurrying over the beautiful ocean to the edges of the land, she called her son Eros, and "What is this I hear," she said, "that my altars are deserted, and men, leaving me, are paying their sacrifices to a maid of mortal birth? Truly I am incensed beyond measure. But I will make this impudent hussy know her place, and who it is that even Zeus, the lord of Heaven, pays homage to. Go thou, my son, and sharpening thy keenest arrow cause her to fall in passionate burning love with some wretch, some renegade, the very lowest of mankind. Then, sealing her command with a kiss from her fragrant

lips, she mounted her rosy ocean-car drawn by white doves, and sped forth over the laughing waves, surrounded by troops of Tritons sounding their melodious shells, and the daughters of Nereus sporting over the deep.

But Eros obediently, having selected a dart and disguised himself with the garment of invisibility, went forth to seek Psyche, that he might wound her. And at last, after some searching, far in the Interior of the king's palace he found her. And lo ! as soon as he set eyes upon her, he was wounded himself. He, the god of Love, was overcome by her beauty, and pierced as with an exceeding pain. Yet did he not dare to declare himself, for fear of the anger of his mother ; but returning his arrow to the quiver retraced, for the time being, his steps.

Meanwhile Psyche sat at home and felt herself lonelier than ever. Though men praised, yet came none to woo her for a bride. Her two elder sisters were already mated, and to powerful chiefs ; but she a forlorn virgin, faint in body and weary at heart, bewailed her lonely plight, and loathed her own beauty though it delighted the rest of the world. Thus, and filled with strange forebodings, she sat :

till at length her father, foreboding ill himself, suspecting the hostility of the gods, and dreading their anger, determined to consult the ancient oracle of Apollo. And lo ! when he did so, the Voice, in words of deepest dread, pronounced as it seemed her inevitable doom. For, "Take her," it said, "attired as for her funeral to the top of some high crag and leave her there ; a wild and tameless husband she shall have, and for her wedding bid the world good-bye."

Then the King, misunderstanding the meaning of the oracle, and the Queen and the whole land with him, were greatly grieved, and plunged in mourning. Ten days they passed in tears and lamentations ; but on the tenth day they formed a procession, and, conducting her to the summit of a high mountain, went through the rites as for her burial ; and then, with torches inverted and loud wailings and plaintive strains of music, leaving her alone in that dread place, they took their homeward way, and abandoned themselves to despair.

But Psyche, meanwhile, lay trembling and weeping on the summit of the rock ; till Zephyr, the gentle god, came and caressed her with his soothing breath,

and at last, fluttering and playing amid her garments, gradually expanded them, till he lifted her up and wafting her softly down the mountain side, laid her in the flowery turf of the valley below.

II

Now when Psyche came to herself, after her aerial flight, she found herself in some kind of Enchanted Garden. Lovely groves and thickets, streams and fountains, were on all sides ; and in the midst stood a palace of fairy beauty, all carven in cedar-wood and ivory and gold. Soft strains of music, she knew not whence, drew her feet onward, and voices, from forms she could not see, hovered round ; till at length she stepped across the threshold ; when the beauty and richness of the interior still more amazed her. But what amazed her most was that this Treasure-house of the Universe (as it seemed) was protected by no chain, no bar, no lock, but was open apparently to all the world.

And while she wondered, an unseen voice addressed her. "Why, lady," it said, "are you astonished at such riches? All are yours. Repair therefore to your chamber, or to the bath, and refresh your

wearied limbs ; for we, whose voices you hear, are your handmaidens and will attend to all your commands, and when we have dressed you, will serve some refreshment without delay." Psyche therefore obeyed the pleasant instructions, and when she had rested and bathed, sat down to a dainty banquet at which the dishes moved of their own accord, while the air vibrated with music and to the voices of an invisible choir.

But when these pleasures had come to an end, and slumber began to press upon her lids, Psyche retired to her chamber, and lying down upon the couch was soon wrapt in profound repose. From which however ere the hour of midnight, she was awakened. For there came a gentle murmuring voice which at first alarmed, but presently by its sweetness overcame her fears ; and her unknown bridegroom, Eros (for he it was who was lord of that place), ascended the bed and stretched himself beside her. But Psyche lay trembling and hesitant as she felt in the darkness his close embrace, and caught the fragrance of his breath, and the passionate kisses of his lips—and full of agitation as she wondered what his form and feature might be , till at

length he consummated his love and made her his wife, and she forgot all question in her gladness. But, as soon as the first faint streak of Dawn ran along the distant hills, and before it was yet light, Eros arose and left her. And Psyche, sad at his departure yet joyous in the prospect of his return, spent the day in that beautiful domain, and yet longed for the night which should hide it from her eyes. And so passed many days and nights ; and each night Eros came, and ascended the couch, and remained entwining her with his love through the hours of darkness , but at the first streak of dawn he fled—and Psyche saw not his face. And when she was grieved at this, and implored him more than once to reveal himself and show her his true form, he would only reply : “ I entreat you, my darling Psyche, not to seek to behold me at present, or to ask me who and what I am—lest a great evil come upon us.” Then he would kiss her very tenderly, and for the time being she would be content. Nevertheless, after a time, feeling her loneliness in that place, she would again fall into grieving.

Meanwhile her Sisters, hearing how she had been exposed to a dread fate on the summit of the mountain,

came thither, if by any chance they might obtain tidings of her, and remained for some days, calling upon her name with cries and lamentations. But her Unknown Lover warned Psyche that she should not listen to them, nor even turn her eyes in their direction, lest by doing so she should bring the calamity that he feared. And Psyche would fain have obeyed him ; but when she thought of her own strange fate she was filled with pity for herself, and instead of listening to him broke into tears, saying : " A hard lot truly is mine, to be cut off from all human conversation in this splendid Prison, where I may not behold thy face, nor even reply to the cries of my sorrowing sisters ; it were well indeed if I had never come here," and she refused to be comforted. So Eros was moved in his heart, and agreed that her sisters should visit her, and even gave command to Zephyr to waft them at Psyche's order—but on one condition, that she should not by any means be persuaded to ask who or what he was, lest indeed her curiosity should be her ruin. And she, with many caresses and endearing embraces, promised most faithfully that it should be so.

Then the next day, when her lover had departed,

to the rock she hastened, and calling aloud to her sisters bade them dry their tears and cease their mourning, for she was there and waiting to greet them. And Zephyr, at her bidding, immediately lifted them from the crag and placed them safely in her presence; when, after mutual embraces and inquiries, they accompanied her with much curiosity to her new home. But when she showed them all its treasures and beauties, and having refreshed them with the bath and the banquet made them hearken to the voices that followed, and observe the unseen hands that fulfilled her commands, they were suddenly seized with fresh envy in the lowest depth of their breasts. And one of them especially, very minute and contriving in her mind, persisted in making inquiries about the Master of this celestial wealth, as to what kind of person he might be, and what sort of husband to her.

Psyche, however, would not on any account neglect her lover's commands, or reveal the secrets of her breast; but, on the spur of the moment, told them that he was a young man and very good-looking, with cheeks as yet only shaded with soft down, and that he was, for the most part, engaged

in rural pursuits and hunting on the mountains. And lest, by any slip in the course of a long conversation, she might betray herself, she loaded them with presents of gold and jewels, and calling Zephyr ordered him to convoy them back again.

Then, as they were on their way home, they broke into words of bitterest envy. "You saw," said one—the younger of the two—"what riches there were in that house—what necklaces, what dresses, what heaps of gold, what gems the very floor is inlaid with. If, besides all this, her husband is as handsome as she maintains, there lives not a happier woman—a goddess, one might say, whom the very winds obey. And she indeed, the youngest of us, who has done nothing to deserve all this! While I, wretched creature, am blessed with a husband who is older than my father, and who besides is as bald as a pumpkin and as puny as a boy, and who is not satisfied but he must fasten up every part of his house with Bolts and Chains."

"And I," continued the elder sister, "have to put up with a partner who is twisted and crippled with Disease; and who consequently seldom favors me with his embraces; but wants me instead to be

everlastingly rubbing and treating his crooked and chalky fingers with fomentations and rags and filthy poultices—as if I were no wife, but a female doctor."

Thus they continued, ever goading each other with cruel words into a perfect fury against their innocent sister, till their minds became bent on her destruction ; and they planned to visit her again ere long, if so they might effect it.

III

IN the meantime Eros, foreseeing danger, again and most emphatically warned Psyche, saying, " Those perfidious she-wolves, your sisters, are plotting against us with all their might, that they may prevail upon you to view my features, which, as I have told you before, as yet you must not see. For before long an infant will be born to us, and child though you be you are pregnant with another child—which, if you are faithful to me, will be of nature divine, but if not, will be mortal. Shun therefore those wicked women, whom, after the deadly hate they harbor against you, it were no longer right to call sisters ; neither see nor listen to them, when like Sirens

hanging over the crag they once more make the rocks resound with their ill-omened voices."

Then Psyche, divided between the joy of future motherhood, and anxiety that she might see her sisters again, besought him with tears in her eyes to allow the latter once more to visit her. "By the hope," she said, "that in my babe I may at least behold your features, whom I so devotedly love, grant me once more the pleasure of embracing my sisters whom I have deserted for your sake—nor doubt for a moment my fidelity which I have already shown, nor my power of keeping a secret that is so necessary for my own happiness." Then her husband, enchanted by these tender words and her sweet embraces, granted that which she desired, and immediately forestalled the coming of the dawn by flight.

And now the sisters hastened, burning with evil passions, to the rock ; and without waiting for the assistant breeze, leapt straightway with unbridled rashness from the height ; an act which indeed would have been their last, had not Zephyr, obedient to his mistress's desire, received them (tho' reluctantly) in his bosom, and laid them gently on the ground.

With rapid steps and without delay they entered the palace, and screening themselves deceitfully behind the name of sister, affected the greatest interest in her condition. "Why, Psyche," they said, "you are not quite so slim as you used to be, surely before long you will be a mother! What a gift you have in store for us in that satchel of yours beneath your girdle, and with what great joy you will gladden our whole house! How we shall delight to nurse this golden babe, for if it only rivals its parents in beauty, 'twill be a perfect Cupid."

Thus by false words they gradually stole her heart, while she, after making them rest and refresh themselves with the bath, presently regaled them with an exquisite banquet, to the sound of harps and flutes and all manner of aerial music. But the malice of these evil women was not to be softened by sweet sounds; and so, shaping their conversation with intent to lead her into a snare, they began insidiously as before to inquire what sort of person her husband was, and from what family descended. And she in her simplicity, having forgotten her former account, invented one somewhat different; and then, when

they challenged this, in her confusion alas ! confessed her ignorance !

But they, as prepared, immediately and in grave tones said : " Happy indeed are you, dear Psyche, and blissful in your ignorance. There you sit, unknowing of your own danger, but we who care for you so deeply are in despair at what threatens you. For we have discovered for a fact, nor can we longer conceal it from you, that your love, that secretly entwines you at night, is nothing but an evil serpent of base and venomous nature. Remember for a moment how the Pythian oracle said you were destined to wed a wild and fierce animal. Besides it is a fact that many of the countryfolk have seen a huge snake, with puffed head and gaping jaws swimming across the rivers in this direction of an evening, on the way back from his feeding-grounds ; and indeed they firmly believe that he will devour you."

Poor Psyche, though she hardly gave credit to what they said, yet could not but be dismayed ; and the sisters following up their advantage argued with her, and brought all sorts of trumped-up stories and hearsay evidence to confirm their argument, and

to prove that her lover, far from being divine, was nothing but an unclean monster ; till she, overcome by all their talk, completely gave way, and allowed that it must be so. Then when they had persuaded her that it was her bounden duty, and her only safety, to rid the world of this thing by stabbing it secretly in the dark ; and had extorted from her a faithful promise that she would do so ; they left her, and being wafted in the usual way to the summit of the mountain, hastened homeward rejoicing, and full of glee at the success of their machinations.

But Psyche, left to herself, and in the solitude of that place, was overwhelmed by the most dreadful doubts. All that her sisters had said rose up with the most vivid semblance of truth before her, and seemed only to be confirmed by her unknown paramour's strange conduct : his concealment of his own form, his dread of the light of day, and his terrible threats and forbiddal of all inquiry. All this came back upon her with painful force and distinctness, till at last she was worked up into a perfect fever of determination, and felt no doubt whatever as to what she had to do.

Selecting a knife, the sharpest she could find, she

made its edge doubly keen by whetting it on a stone, and even passed it once or twice across the palm of her delicate hand ; then after placing it in a nook of safety, she proceeded to prepare a lamp, trimming the wick and providing it with oil, in order that it might be ready for her need. But by the time these preparations were completed, and the evening had arrived, the fever of her anger having now passed away, Psyche fell into a state of utter wretchedness and misery. Her heart was still hardened against her supposed enemy, but it was like lead or a stone. Its weight within her was more than she could bear ; and before the usual hour she retired to her couch and lay there motionless like one who could have wept her life away but the fountain of her tears was all congealed.

Long hours she lay. But at last, when it was quite dark, there came that well-known murmuring sound and sweet wafted air as of wings, and in a moment as usual the unknown One lay beside her.

Strenuously Psyche exerted herself to receive him as usual, and appear in nowise different in manner ; but it was a thing of the utmost difficulty to throw off the weight and horror that was on her, and indeed

so exhausted was her mind with all its suffering, and so poisoned by what she had heard, that even the ambrosial feathers of Eros' wings seemed to her like horrid scales, and touching them she was confirmed in her dread resolution. So that when at length Eros lay at rest, and by the sound of his breathing she knew he had fallen into deep slumber, rising from the bed and stealing tip-toe across the room, she took the lamp (ready lighted as it was) from its place of concealment, and holding it up in her left hand and grasping the knife firmly, like a dagger, in her right, nerved herself with a great effort—her eyes to encounter, and her hand at the same time to slay, the monster of whom they had told her.

But the instant the light fell that way, and the mysteries of the couch were revealed, she beheld the very gentlest and sweetest of all wild creatures, even Eros himself, the beautiful God of Love, there fast asleep; at sight of whom the glad flame of the lamp shone doubly bright, and even the wicked knife repented of its edge.

But as for Psyche, astounded at such a vision, she lost control of her senses; and faint, and deadly pale, and trembling all over, fell on her knees, and

indeed would have hid the knife in her own bosom, had it not nimbly (as it were of its own accord) slipped from her hand. And now, faint and unnerved as she was, it was new life to her to gaze on those divine features: those ambrosial abundant locks of golden hue, and ruddy cheeks, and lips just fringed with down; and to see his dewy wings of dazzling whiteness, and fair smooth body such as Venus might well have given birth to. While at the foot of the bed lay his bow and quiver and arrows, the well-known emblems of the God.

And so it happened that while Psyche with ever new wonder and curiosity was examining these last, she touched the point of one of the arrows with her thumb to try its sharpness, and by chance, as her hand still trembled, punctured the skin—from which some tiny drops of roseate blood oozed forth. And so, without knowing it, by Love's own force she fell in love with Love. Then burning more and more with desire, she gazed passionately on Eros and kissed him again and again.

But even while she did so, the lamp—perchance by treachery moved, perchance by envy—suddenly spirted forth a drop of scalding oil, which fell upon

his right shoulder. [O rash audacious lamp, ungrateful minister of love, thus to burn the very god of fire ! You, whom some lover, doubtless, first invented—even that he might prolong through the night the bliss of beholding his heart's desire !] The god, thus scorched, sprang from the bed, and seeing in an instant what had happened, spread wings without a word, even before the eyes and outstretched arms of his most wretched spouse. But she, in the instant he rose, seized hold and hung to him, a wretched appendage to his flight through the regions of the air, till at last her strength gave out, and she fell exhausted to earth.

Then her immortal lover, alighting on a neighboring cypress-tree, addressed her as follows : “ O simple, simple Psyche, was it not for you that I disobeyed my mother Aphrodite ? for when she bade me infect you with mad passion for some base and worthless man, I chose rather to fly to you myself as a lover. And now I, that all-dreaded Archer, am like a fool wounded by my own arrow, and have made you my wife in order, forsooth, that you might doubt me for an evil beast, and be ready to cut off my head, which you ought to have loved better than

anything in the whole world. As for those choice counsellors of yours, they shall speedily feel my vengeance, but you I rebuke only by flight." And so saying he soared aloft, and mounted into the air.

IV

BUT Psyche lay powerless on the ground, gazing and gazing on the flight of her lord and lover, till at last the measured pulse of his wings through the immeasurable sky bore him completely out of sight. Then she rose, and without more ado threw herself headlong from the bank on which she lay into the river below. But the gentle stream, honoring and fearing the god, whose sway extended even beneath its waters, bore her safe on the surface of a wave to the bank, and laid her again on the flowery turf. Then Psyche, since the waters would not harm her, took courage, and set forth wandering through the lands in lifelong search for Eros

But the latter flying straight to his mother's chamber, lay there a-groaning and in pain from the wound which Psyche had caused him. And a snow-white sea-gull, acting as messenger, flew off, and skimming along the waves of the sea dived down

at last into its bosom. There, approaching Aphrodite as she bathed and swam, it told her that her son was kept in bed by a bad and painful burn, and that his cure was doubtful ; that all sorts of scandalous stories were flying about concerning the whole family of Venus ; and that every one was saying that mother and son had gone off, the one to a mountain to carry on an intrigue with a girl, the other to the sea for some unknown purpose , and that in consequence Pleasure, Grace and Beauty were nowhere to be found, and general disorder and slovenliness had taken possession of the world. Thus did this very meddling bird chatter in Aphrodite's ear, to make mischief between her and her son.

The goddess, enraged, insisted on knowing who the girl was of whom this was said. And when the talkative bird, only too ready to reply, mentioned the name of Psyche, Aphrodite's indignation (for she remembered the rival of her fame) knew no bounds. Emerging instantly from the sea she hastened to her golden chamber, and finding it true that her son was lying there wounded, she bawled out at the top of her voice even before entering the door : “ You're a nice young spark, you are ! first to trample

under foot my command that you should torment this girl, my enemy ; and then actually to make love to her and to take her to your embraces , all that you may vex me, and add insult to injury ! But from your childhood you have been a bad lot ! Many a time have you struck your elders, and even me, your mother. Every day you turn me into ridicule, and pay me no more attention than if I were a widow. You do not even fear your step-father, Ares, that brave and doughty warrior ; for you are always setting him to pursue the wenches, to my torment. But I'll make you repent this time, and sour and bitter shall you find this match. For I'll set my old foes, Propriety and Temperance, to clip your wings—ay, and to blunt your arrows and unstring your bow, and extinguish your burning torch ; and Psyche I will torment with endless tasks and trials."

Having thus vented her wrath, she bounced out of doors again ; but on the very threshold came upon the goddesses, Demeter and Hera, who seeing her angry face asked what was the matter. And when she told them her story, they, glad of an opportunity to jeer at her a little, replied : " What great offence

after all, good Madam, has your son been guilty of—that you should be so wrathful against him and the young lady? Is it a crime if he should be somewhat free with a pretty girl? Have you forgotten his sex, or his youth—or because he carries his years so jauntily, do you fancy him ever a boy? We have always heard that you were mistress of the amorous arts and crafts, and you now take your handsome son to task for following your charming example? But what god or man will bear with you if, while you are everywhere scattering voluptuous desires over the world, you insist at the same time on checking the gallantries of your own house, and shutting up that famous Pandora's box of female frailties?"

At these words Aphrodite, incensed beyond endurance, turned her back on the other two, and took herself off with hasty step and heaving bosom to her home in the depth of the ocean.

But Psyche's eldest sister meanwhile, hearing a vague report of what had happened—and of Psyche's exile from her enchanted palace—and being seized with envious desire and maddening lust to obtain all these riches and the embraces of a god, conceived

the idea of supplanting Psyche ; and secretly leaving her husband, hurried to the top of the rock, and in greedy and ungoverned haste threw herself down, expecting Zephyr as usual to receive her. A few days after, the second sister, in the same manner and moved by the same desire, did the very same thing. And thus these two, dashed to death at the foot of the rocks, met with the fitting reward of their treachery.

Aphrodite, however, did not remain long in her Ocean-bowers ; but having resolved on a plan of action ordered her chariot to be got ready—her beautiful chariot of burnished gold, which Hephaestus had made and presented her on her marriage, and which was the more precious through the very loss of its material by the file. Four white doves, with joyous fluttering, harnessed themselves thereto ; and Aphrodite seating herself in it immediately flew through the air and the clouds, and traversing the lofty æther of heaven itself went straight to the royal throne of Zeus. Where—in haughty tones and not explaining the whole truth—she said : “ Thou knowest, O Ageless one, that of all the gods and goddesses I chiefly rule over Nature and the world of mortals below. Now then, one of my

servants there, a female slave I may say, has absconded and withdrawn herself from my dominion. Grant me then the services of Hermes, the crier-god, in order that I may find her." To this the azure brow of Zeus did not refuse consent, and Aphrodite exultant, as she descended from heaven with Hermes, conveyed to him her instructions. She gave him a little book in which were written Psyche's name and all the particulars of her life, and Aphrodite's claims upon her; and charged him that he should cry her description (as a fugitive) among all the nations! Which Hermes duly did; adding, by way of reward for her recovery, that whoever should bring her back or make known her place of concealment should receive for compensation seven sweet kisses from Aphrodite herself and one touch of her ambrosial tongue.

But no sooner was this proclamation made, than the desire of mankind to obtain such a reward excited their endeavors and activity to the highest degree. And poor Psyche, as she wandered from place to place over the lands, soon saw that her doom was sealed, and that she could not hope to escape the hands of her avenger.

First in her wanderings it chanced that she came

to the temples of Demeter and of Hera—and there, with the view of propitiating the goddesses, she performed all the rites of Religion and the service of their altars. But even these deities, though they had scoffed at Aphrodite, did not venture to interfere with her dominion, or to afford Psyche a permanent refuge and hiding-place within their precincts—so they gave her in return for her pious service the somewhat empty consolation of their blessings and good wishes, and bade her move on to some other locality. Then Psyche, in despair since she could find no protection in the temples, concluded that it was better for her to surrender to Aphrodite at once—and that perchance by doing so, and thus penetrating into the household of the haughty goddess, she might find that beloved Eros whom she sought.

With this forlorn hope she wandered on ; but had not gone far when, as it happened, she was met by one of Aphrodite's own retinue, a powerful old virago whose name was Habit ; who immediately bawling at Psyche for a good-for-nothing wench, seized upon her, and twisting her hands in her hair dragged her along into Aphrodite's presence. But the latter, breaking into a loud and bitter laugh, such as people

laugh who are madly angry, "Have you condescended at length," said she, "to pay your respects to your mother-in-law? or have you perhaps come to see your sick husband, who suffers yet from the wound you gave him? But never mind. I, at any rate, will give you such a welcome as a good mother-in-law should." So saying she called for those servants of hers, Care and Grief, and delivered Psyche over to them, that they might torment her to their hearts' content. And when in obedience to their mistress's commands they had scourged and plagued her beyond measure, they brought her back again into Aphrodite's presence.

But the latter, noticing Psyche's figure and condition, set up another laugh, saying : "How interesting she looks! and how thoughtful of her—to make me a happy grandmother! I who am just now in the flower of my age! And now, I suppose, the son of a vile handmaid will be called my grandson!" Then, working herself up into a perfect fury, and turning to Psyche, she continued : "But this shall never be, for such a child born out of due wedlock will be nothing but a bastard, even if I suffer you to bring it to life at all."

So saying she flew upon her, tore her clothes in ever so many places, pulled out her hair, shook her by the head, and shamefully misused her. Then, taking grains and seeds of wheat, barley, millet, poppy, vetches, lentils and beans, and mixing them all together in one heap, she said : " Ugly slave as you now are, I think if you want lovers your best way will be to learn the virtue of Drudgery. Let me therefore teach you industrious habits. Take this confused mass of seeds, and sort and separate them, if you please, each grain into its place—and finish the task before evening." And so leaving her before the heap, she forthwith went off to a wedding supper to which she had been invited

But Psyche, stupefied by the very thought of what was before her, sat silent without moving a finger to her task. Till at last a tiny ant, peeping out of the earth, perceived her sad case, and busily running about called together the whole tribe of ants, saying, " Take pity, ye nimble children of the earth, of the wife of Eros (whom ye all adore)—a pretty damsel, who is now in desperate plight—and come and sort these seeds for her." Immediately the six-footed folk came rushing in regular waves one after another,

and with infinite industry separated the whole heap, grain by grain ; and then when they had made so many different piles, they at once disappeared.

At nightfall, when Aphrodite returned from the banquet, exhilarated with wine, and fragrant with balsams and the rose-blooms that encircled her waist, seeing what had been done, she said : " This is not your handiwork, wicked creature, but his whose head you have turned, to your own sorrow as well as his." And so tossing her a bit of black bread, she went to bed.

V

BUT as soon as morning broke she called Psyche again and set her a fresh task, and one full of danger : to wit, to obtain some of their golden wool from those formidable sheep which pasture along a certain river-bank ; for transported with rage by the burning heat of the sun, they (as is well known) are the destruction of mortals—either by their sharp horns, their stony foreheads, or their poisonous bites. Nor could Psyche possibly have dared to encounter them, had not the gentle Spirit of the river instructed her to wait till the sun went down, when, the sheep

being lulled to rest by the music of his waters, she would find the fleecy gold sticking to the branches of the shrubs. So when she easily performed this command, Aphrodite, smiling bitterly, said : " I see plainly enough that some one has helped you again. But look ! Here is a fresh task. Do you see the summit of yonder high mountain ? There among the rocks springs a black fountain of dusky waters which lower down becomes the river Styx, that river of desolation which divides the living from the dead. Bring me with all haste an urnful of that ice-cold fluid, nor seek it anywhere but at its source." Thus speaking she gave her, with renewed threats, a vase of polished crystal ; and Psyche, starting, hastened towards the height.

But no sooner did she arrive there than she was petrified with fear and despair, for the waves with a hoarse roar plunged down a channel between steep and lofty rocks, over which fierce dragons, to right and left, stretched out their long necks, and kept eternal watch with unwinking vigilance. And ever as they rolled along, the waters exclaimed : " Begone ; mind what you do ; have a care ; fly, you will perish."

So Psyche's heart turned as cold as the waters,

and she lay down in that awful place, alone and with no hope but to die. But from the gracious eye of Heaven the sorrow of the pure soul is not hid. The fierce and royal eagle, the bird of Zeus, sailing over that land espied and flew to her, and remembering all he owed to Eros pitied deeply the young wife. "Psyche," he said, "to your unaided strength this most sacred yet most terrible fountain is utterly inaccessible. Even the gods tremble at the thought of its waters. Give me the cup." Then snatching it from her hand, on his strong wings he sailed away, steering in and out between the rows of raging teeth and the three-forked tongues of the dragons, till he reached the spring, and filling the cup, returned, and gave it to Psyche.

Yet not even by the fulfilment of this enterprise was the anger of Aphrodite appeased. She must needs send her, even beyond the waters of Separation, into the kingdom of Death itself. With a smile, foreboding of evil, she said: "Psyche, my dear, you are a perfect sorceress, or you could never so well have performed my commands; but there is one task more I must set you. I must ask you to take this box and turn your steps to the infernal regions

and the gloomy palace of Hades. Then give the box to Persephone, and say, Aphrodite asks you to send her a small portion of your beauty—enough at least to last for one day ; for she has used up all her own store, in attendance on her sick son. Then return with the utmost celerity, for I must adorn myself with this beauty of Persephone, before I go to the assembly of the gods.” So saying, she gave Psyche the box, and sent her off.

Then truly the wretched girl felt assured that her end had come : for to everything mortal death is the end, and Psyche knew not but that she also was mortal. But as she was meditating how to kill herself, as indeed the shortest way to the infernal regions, there came a voice to her saying, “ Do no violence to thyself, Psyche, for though indeed in this way thou mayest go to the palace of Hades, yet shalt thou thus by no means return. But listen to me. Go to Tenarus, which is by Lacedæmon, that great city of Achæa ; and there, at Tenarus, you will find a cavern, which is the breathing hole of the underworld. This cavern is the threshold of the direct path leading to the palace of Hades. But before entering it take care that you provide yourself

with certain things ; for with empty hands it is impossible to pass through these shades. In your mouth place two pieces of money, and in each hand take a cake of barley bread well sopped in hydromel. Then go rapidly forward till you come to the dark river, where Charon demands his fee and ferries the dead in his crazy boat across to the farther shore.

Nothing even there is done without payment. To that unclean greybeard you will have to give one of the coins you carry, yet in such wise that you must let him take it with his own hand from your mouth. But while you are passing over the stagnant flood, a certain dead old man will come to the surface, and raising his corpse-like fingers entreat you to take him into the boat. Beware, however, how you do so , for even by Pity may the soul be ensnared. And when you have passed the river a little way, behold ! some old women, busily weaving a web, will ask you to lend a helping hand. But still beware how you do so ; for even Help is not always wise and lawful. And all these things, and others, are in reality snares, prepared for you by Aphrodite, that you may drop one of the cakes from your hand,

and so never fulfil the quest you have before you. For the want of only one of these sops would surely prevent your return to the light. A huge dog (as you know) with three ferocious necks and heads, and barking with jaws of thunder, watches ever before the black palace of Persephone, and terrifies with his noise the dead, though he cannot injure them. This dog, Cerberus, you must appease with one of your sops ; then, passing quickly by, you will enter the presence of Persephone herself. She will receive you kindly and courteously, and beg you to repose on a soft couch and partake of a rich banquet. But this you must not do. Seating yourself on the ground, ask for a piece of common bread and eat it ; then give your message, and having got the box, bribe the fierce dog, as you return, with the other sop. After that, when you come to the ferry, let the greedy Charon take your remaining coin ; and so passing his river for the second time, ascend, Psyche, to Heaven, and take your place in the choir of the celestial stars. But above all I warn you, be careful not to open or even look on the box which you carry, or to search into its hidden treasure."

In this way the voice advised her. But Psyche,

at once and without delay, hastened to Tenarus, and taking her coins and her sops, ran down the infernal avenue. Then having given the ferryman his fee, and turned a deaf ear to the prayers of the floating corpse and the web-weaving old women, and slipping quickly by the sop-fed dog, she entered the palace. Here, as instructed, she refused the delicate seat and delicious food offered her, and instead sat humbly at the feet of Persephone, content with a piece of common bread. Then when she had received the box (already filled and closed) she hastened back as before to the glorious light of day.

But even here her last trial awaited her. For even after having passed through the Awful Valley in safety and returned, poor Psyche, not yet freed, was overcome by the contents of the box she carried. Seized with a desire to learn what was in it, and to partake of its store of beauty, she rashly opened it. But the box contained not a particle of beauty, but only an infernal and mortal Sleep, the image of Death from whose kingdom it was drawn: and this, being freed from its prison, immediately poured itself over her, suffusing her limbs in a dense cloud

of somnolence, till she lay prostrate and without motion, and just like a senseless corpse.

And how long she might have lain no one knows, had not Eros, now recovered from his wound, and grown, even by what had happened, to greater glory and manhood than before, bethought him of his dear Psyche, and, escaping from his chamber, gone on swift wings in search of her. Nor had he flown far before he came upon her thus lying. Then quickly seeing what had happened, he carefully removed the cloud of sleep, lifting it off from her like a veil, and folding it together, shut it in its old receptacle, the box, while at the same time putting his arms round her he kissed her ardently upon the lips. Psyche thus awakened was overjoyed to behold her lover once more ; and in the tumult of her emotions nearly swooned away. But Eros, reminding her how curiosity had for the second time nearly undone her, bade her now finish her task quickly ; and he would attend to the rest. So Psyche, with radiant face, and looking more beautiful than ever before, took the steep ascent onward to heaven.

But Eros, flying swiftly to the very throne of Zeus, put the whole case before him, and begged

his aid, for the girl and himself, against the wrath of Aphrodite. And Zeus, having given the matter full consideration, bade Hermes summon a full assembly of the gods, adding as an enforcement that if any one of them absented himself he should be fined ten thousand pieces of money. So when, owing to the fear of this penalty, the heavenly theatre was quite full, Zeus sitting on his throne, and with his arm embracing Eros, who stood by his side, spoke as follows : “ Ye assembled Celestials, whose names are written in the white roll of the Muses, you are all well enough acquainted with this youth, this masterful son of mine, whom I have reared with my own hands. You know that he does not always pay even to me the reverence that is my due. You know how he fills with his intrigues the whole course of Nature, including the elements and the stars and the plants and animals of the earth, and the races of men, not even excepting the gods themselves ; so that all of us, tho’ we are fain to forgive him, are entangled in his wiles, and have our fair reputations sullied. Now then, since the whole earth cries out against his adulteries, and since he himself has come to man’s estate and is no longer

a child, it is fitting that order should be introduced into his ways and harmony where before was confusion. You are aware that he has made choice of a girl, and deprived her of her virginity. Let him therefore—this is our Olympian decree—hold to her, let him possess her, and embracing Psyche make her ever henceforth the object of his love. Nor do you, my daughter," he said, turning to Aphrodite, "be offended, or afraid that your family will be disgraced by a mortal alliance; for I will now cause the marriage to be not unequal, but all in order, and agreeable to the law." So saying, he commanded Hermes to bring Psyche to heaven; and as soon as she arrived, extending to her a cup of ambrosia, "Drink this, Psyche," said he "and be immortal; and Eros shall never quit your embrace, but your union shall be perpetual."

Then, without delay, a sumptuous wedding supper was served. The husband, at one end of the table, reclined with Psyche in his bosom. In like manner, at the other end, were Zeus and Hera; and after them the other gods and goddesses in their proper order. Dionysus supplied the mystic nectar; the rustic Ganymede waited upon Zeus; Hephaestus

dressed the table ; the Hours scattered roses and all fragrant flowers ; the Graces shed love and gentleness ; the Muses sang , Apollo struck the lyre ; and Aphrodite danced , till at length with nightfall Ceremony was dissolved, and gaiety reigned in heaven.

Thus came Psyche by divine ordinance into the hands of Eros ; and at length from a mature pregnancy a daughter was born, whose name was Joy or Gladness.

SOME EARLY VERSES

IN A CANOE

FROM shade to light, from light to shade,
The overbending boughs between,
I glide, as in a fairy glade,
Till the sweet summer day is made
A melody of summer green.
The meadows all are clothed with light,
As with a garment, and the heat
Swims dreamful where the grass is dight
With ox-eye daisies and the white
Of lady's smock and meadow-sweet.
And clear-cut in the quiet air
Move large brown outlines of the cows,
That nose Earth's verdure fresh and fair
And scatter far its perfume where
With peaceful onward push they browse.
Beside the brink the swift stream lags,
And spreads its liquid arms to cool
The golden-flowered phalanx of flags

Whereby the water-wagtail wags
Its mirrored head in many a pool.
And here a swallow lightly skims
Or strikes the broad flood, breast to breast,
And there in shady hollow swims
The lazy roach between wet rims
Of water-lilies, where they rest.
Here by an overhanging bank
The sunlit soft transparent wave
Reveals a myriad lives that prank
In giddy dance within the dank
Deep water-world which is their grave,
And there a wild rose overblown
Showers red rain on the shining way,
And the fair moving fields are sown
With countless blossoms random-thrown
And gliding downwards with the day,
And here and there a willow dips
And dallies with the dimpling plain,
But evermore the river slips
Onward—as from a maiden's lips
Some low melodious refrain.
And with a soft and rippling sound
The little bark fleets onward too,

By bushy brake and meadow-bound,
The swimming swirling curves around,
Till in a slumbrous swoon the view
Slides swiftly shifting, and the shades
Grow longer, and the evening light
Dies, and the sunset splendour fades
Slowly against the stars of night

CAMBRIDGE, 1869.

THE ARTIST TO HIS LADY

I put my hands together, palm to palm,
And say 'Take these; and, whereso'er thou wilt
Go,—I will follow' For indeed I have
No other life than this—to follow Thee.

THE lady of my love is very fair;
Often when morning rose above the rain
She waved her white hand at the window-pane,
And passed and mounted through the fields of air.

I never saw her face or felt her smile,
She seemed to pine among the haunts of men;
Till at the last I left my city den,
And followed in her footsteps for a while.

She led me where the light shines freely down,
She set me by the river-fringes green,
And turned herself, and in her face, I ween,
The glories of all worlds to me were shown.

Her marble front is not of mortal mould,
Her look is of the lands which are not seen,
Broad is her brow, somewhat austere her mien,
Yet magical her beauty to behold

For all the friendless way hedged with offence,
For all the hours forsaken of her face,
Now to behold in peace her peerless grace
Is and remains my perfect recompense.

CAMBRIDGE, 1871.

APHRODITE

I

ONCE, when as ever since the world began,
Dawn touched the silver level of the sea,
And like a golden shield of growing span
Crept on the land of twilight stealthily ;
The Sun, yet sunk below his eastern lea,
Whence all the heavenly limits he could mark,
As Perseus through Medusa's locks, in glee
Shot all his shining fingers through the Dark,
And once more laid the monster motionless and
stark.

II

In that day for the inhabitants of Earth
And Heaven, moving in darkness heretofore,
A vision of high beauty came to birth
Amid the foam of Ocean's eastern shore :
Such as the Gods, who tread their golden floor,
And mortals, dwellers in the orange grove

Domed with aerial blue, in all their lore
Feigned not in earth below or sky above,
Yet, seeing, made the queen and regent of their
love.

III

For while the waves danced onward o'er the deep,
As at the first day bright and bluely clear,
And morning mounting up the saffron steep
In opaline pure splendour did appear
Pavilioning with flame the ocean-sphere,
A mist shot upward from the shining main,
A deep blush brightened through it, like a tear
That trembles on a rosebud after rain
And glows with heightened hue on what it cannot
stain.

IV

One cloud-like moment in the air it hung ;
And then the Sun, in eastern state confest,
Great level arms along the ocean flung,
Giving to each swart wave a golden crest,
And let one finger on the foambell rest,
Which like a hollow fretted crystalline

Of some rich secret rudely dispossessed,
Sundered and parted in the bright sunshine,
Showing the Foamborn in her beauty made divine.

V

A sunbow bent above her for a sign,
The spray embowered her in brilliant rain,
Her rosy feet upon the hyaline
Danced lightly like rose-petals o'er a plain ;
Heaven was her canopy, a lofty fane
For incense and for music and high mirth,
Her laughing eyes, turned sunward, did detain
As in a mirror, all the smiles of Earth
Made happier because of beauty's perfect birth.

VI

With one hand half uplifted did she hold
Her fair locks from her in a shining band,
As if to match the sunlight with their gold
Glittering with ocean-dew ; the other hand
Sustained a robe sea-woven of glaucous strand,
Which veiled her limbs as softly as the moon
Glimmers where dawn-illumined mountains stand
Rosy in snow, or as in leafy June
The glowing foliage holds yet hides the hot midnoon.

VII

And where she stood the waves on every side
Fell from her into many a hollow space
And fair concavity, as though they tried
To keep the impress of her rounded grace
In inverse beauty ; like a crystal case,
Broken to free some glory of art, they lay,
But shifting ever as to catch a trace
Of that fair model, till in fair dismay
They spread and died upon the distance far
away.

VIII

For with divine consent from arm to arm,
From breast to brow, the lines of beauty run
And shift and flow with ever-changing charm
Which nothing can detain beneath the sun ;
And like a silver fount that seems to shun
Even momentary rest, but ever flows
In wasteful beauty till the day is done,
Lovely in loss, since loveless in repose,
So rich in love's regret fair Aphrodite rose.

IX

And Neptune's children from the emerald gloom
Of ocean caverns, in a boisterous pack
Played round about her path of roseate bloom—
Sea-nymph and Triton in a foamy track,
With winds and water-sprites and cloudy rack
Of morning, and the mountains seen afar—
Orbed in one onward course which grew not slack
Till Venus, mounting on her dove-drawn car,
Went heavenward through the blue vault like a
glistening star.

X

Therefore when Gorgon-headed Night was gone—
In labyrinthine marble calm and dread
Unearthly glitter, death to look upon—
Beauty arose to birth, and so was wed
To every dawn-lit dell and mountain-head
And dream of man ; wherewith in flowing guise
Unto the heavenly lands she lightly sped,
To be Earth's lovely envoy in the skies
And chosen Cynosure of Gods' and mortals' eyes.

SCHRECKHORN

UPWARD all day we toiled athwart the rain,
Henry and I, through Alpine pastures green
And great firwoods that overhung the vale
Far spread below ; but ever, as evening fell,
Day's cloudy curtain parted, and the mists
Thinned more and more, and fled among the hills,
Or dropped beneath, or clung in silver threads
To tresses of dim forest ; and we saw
A clear blue arch of space spanned high above,
And, burning behind the utmost mountain edge,
Gold altar-glories of the stricken sun.

And high amid the snows we found a crag,
Hung darkly on that argent slope, within
Stamped hollow as by rage of Titan foot ;
And there we lit the flame, and made ourselves
Good cheer, while round us dreamed a silent world.

But ere we slept, he, my beloved, arose
And lightly left our firelit cave and stood
Night-circled on a jutting rock beyond ;
And with the setting stars about his head
And at his feet that purple vale profound,
He sang the song he sings me evermore.
He sang to watchful heaven and weary earth,
To glittering peak and star and crescent moon,
And high Love, and the loveworn Heart of all.
And all the vales were filled with melody,
And o'er the wide wide night and clear profound,
And over the blank snows and barren crags,
His song came floating back unto his feet :
Unto his feet, and deep into my heart,
There as I lay by the fire and saw him stand,
Saw him there in the night, and see him now,
Now, and for ever.

For he came not back.

At morning dawn, when earth was dashed with light,
Beside the golden summit he slipped and fell,
And slid, and passed to his own home beyond.

January, 1870

THE VEILED ISIS

*'Eγώ εἰμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονός καὶ ὅν καὶ ἐσόμενον
καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν πέπλον οὐδείς πω θυητὸς ἀπεκάλυψε.*

Now know I that the white-winged hours of heaven
'Twixt me and thee in endless retinue,
Each after each, shall pass ; nor ever pause
To lift the least light corner of thy veil,
Or grant thine eyes to mine O hidden One,
Supreme-set Mother of all mystery,
And myriad-named of men, now know I well
Thou dost endure us but a moment's span
Upon thy heaving bosom to behold
The wonder of thy movement, at thy grace
To fall and worship—ay, we know not what !
And then, or ever thou hast heard, to fall
And pass, remembering ourselves and thee
No more O strange, O unassailable,
Thou that with myriad bright play of eyes
Provokest our desire, thy seamless robe,
Set close about for our bewilderment,
Folds thee in perfect proof. For I have toiled

And tarried long by thy familiar ways,
Have known thee going out and coming in,
And watched thy daily wont ; have felt the flame
Flash from thy face almost to scathe mine eyes,
And heard at night thy breath about my ears
Beat, and pass quickly by ; yea, I have tracked
Thy fingers in and out through woven clouds,
And passionless ebb and flow of waves and streams,
And rockings of the air, only to know
The weft is woven without any flaw
From flight of stars to atoms : rent is none,
No gap, no visionary gleam, and Thou
Art hid for ever.

Therefore now, once more,
I see the Spring descend upon the Earth—
The new life quivering upwards into light ;
I see the plaited green on plant and tree
Slide from the soil and break the knotted bark ;
The grey elm quickens with a strange delight ;
The golden chestnut-buds against the blue
Gleam like a thousand lamps ; and melody
Thrills through the woodland air. O now once more
The primal splendour of the sun returns
With a most welcome triumph. Thorn and may

Stand white with bridal blossom unto him ;
The ground is cloven and the sleeping flowers
Have heard and known their lord : through wood
and dell

Yellow primroses leap and peer to heaven—
He rideth by begirt with azure wings—
And bloom and beauty multitudinous
Break on his path. The violet stands by
Glad in her grassy covert. In the meads
Like angel hosts white daisies wave their wings,
And as he passes bend like one and rise,
And, while he fires with light the Western lands,
Close their bright eyes and blush for very joy.
Once more o'er vale and mountain do I hear
The voice of Spring's sweet trouble : nightingales
And thrushes in the thicket numberless
Tremble to utter on the quiet air
The mystery of eve ; where all night Earth,
Orbed in her dreams of star-related life,
Floats in a flood of moonlight and of dew.
Once more I see it all, and, seeing, know
The infinite of beauty—how thy world
Is charactered with wisdom : each winged sense
Faints with the weight of wonder, till I walk

Like one enchanted to a magic sound,
A king whose eyes are feasted with a play
Of endless scenic change, a child to whom
Earth has no bounds for joy.

And yet, ah ! yet,

Deeper than all, and deeper than my joy,
Thou whom I know, nor yet can ever see,
Thou, mother Isis, mother over all,
Thou radiant life and one Reality,
Vanishest for ever : like the Northern beam
Decking the far-off mountains, all untouched,
Unheard, inviolable, Thou movest on
In the great silence of our hearts, through leaf
And bud and fairy bloom fleeting for aye
Wherever we are not And though our spirits
Burst through their woven chambers till the heart
Ache for the stress of passion ; though our dreams
Be girt about with one dull cloud of death
For hope that cannot pierce ; yea, though our eyes
For gazing vainly on thy vanishings
Waste away in their orbits ; yet at last
We fall, our arms stretched outward on the earth
And features folded in the clay-cold ground,
Nor e'er behold thee face to face at all.

THE TIDE

SIX hours it voiceless sank along the shore
In the soft cloud-girt eve ; turned in its bed,
And dreamed of other lands. But when the night
Grew to its stillest, and none knew thereof,
There crept across the world a wind-like sigh—
Sweet breath of waking lips—that rose, and passed,
And died along the night, and rose again
Ineffable. And Ocean knew once more
Her crescent tide-mark with its golden range
Of fretted sands and shell-impearlèd weeds,
And once more, joyous, filled with rolling waves
Her creeks and inland waterways ; then paused,
And, wondering at herself, sank back to rest,
And dreamed again the dream that has no end.

January, 1870.

SUMMER LIGHTNING

LIKE a dawn the distant lightning,
Fitful, shadow-crowned,
O'er the twilit ocean brightening
Breaks without a sound.

Softly-fair the clouds are riven
Crimsoning in bliss,
As the heights and depths of heaven
Open to its kiss.

Calm in western lake-like splendour
Floats the star of eve :
All hues opaline and tender
Round about it weave ;

And that other crystal ocean
Holds its image clear,
Like a smile with soft emotion
Shining through a tear.

Faintly rings a silver laughter
As the ripples die,
And the rising stars thereafter
Answer, and their cry,

As of love to passion risen,
Passes o'er the strand
From Night's gloomy eastern prison
To the golden land

Where flushed Eve with shining fingers
For an instant keeps
Back the curtained dark, and lingers,
Lovely, ere she sleeps.

So upon the beachy margent
Love a moment stands,
Takes the ocean and the argent
Starlight on the sands;

Takes the sunset slowly whitening
From its golden bloom,
Takes the cloud-girt summer lightning
And the distant gloom;

Orbs them all from world-mutation,
Whole and unforgot,
Into his divine creation
Of immortal thought ;

Where, like essences supernal,
They nor pass nor range,
Lifted high in Love's eternal
O'er eternal change.

NAPLES, 1873.

IN THE GRASS

BY A MONAD (OF LEIBNITZ)

HERE in the grass they laid me long ago,
Far from the tumult and the tears of men,
Soft in the summer grass, forlorn and low—
The face of all the world is changed since then.

Here, on my back and scarce beneath the turf,
To lie and lie for many a summer day,
Hearing the faint far ocean-sweeping surf,
Seeing the blue midnoon and twilight grey.

Yea, though you seek and find me not at all
In these wide meadows and the shoreward plain,
Though in the ground and tangled grasses tall
No vestige of my mortal part remain.

Yet, peradventure, where you plant your heel
And heedless start the lizard on the sand,
I am, and all day watch wild duck and teal
Fly northward in a blue-enamelled band.

Here, void of will, of action unaware,
And dwindled to a mere perceptive point,
Changeless I watch the light divide the air
And glitter on each reedy knot and joint.

Changeless I watch the changes of the sky,
Its liquid blue, its motionless light clouds,—
A solitary seagull sailing by,
A butterfly that him from sight enshrouds

Now midway-down a thin mist thunder-driven
Moves on the air-built battlements beyond ;
Still is the land, until the heights of heaven
Burst and break backward, detonant with sound.

And on the earth fire and a flood are spilled,
The air is no more sultry, but the wind
Drives forward in the grass. The moor-fowl, chilled,
Huddle and crouch in hollows water-lined.

Then, all night long, grey spectres of the dark
Fly onward overhead in strange disguise,
With shriekings of the wind, and weird blue spark
Lighting their myriad white hail-like eyes.

But in the morning with a song the land
Resumes the primal harmony of dawn ;
A lark the latest of its tuneful band,
Into the heart of Paradise is drawn

To sing that sweet and slender hymn that I
Have heard so many ages ever new,
Never the same, yet, as the world goes by,
The same hymn steeped in sunlight and in dew.

And sometimes in the reeds a feathered thing
Will shyly peer about, as though it sought
Some old forgotten love of kindred wing
Amid the grass with last year's dead leaves fraught.

Sometimes a mouse will move, or spider thread
His amber beads betwixt the sky and me,
Sometimes a frozen swallow will fall dead,
Sometimes the southern winds will bring a bee.

Or sometimes in the later autumn days
A red-fanged rough retriever will come nigh,
Threading the scent all through that reedy maze,
And anxious, earnest, panting, pass me by.

But oftenest the world is very still;
A light breeze o'er the land will break and shiver
With musical low melancholy thrill
Among the grasses and the reeds for ever.

I ask no more. The liquid summer light
About this poplar, when its leaves are green,
The change, when glitteringly bare and white
Its branches on the wintry blue are seen.

All are but changes of delight to me,
In each I lose myself, and live, and die,
And rise upon the next with equal glee,
Like one who feasts for ever with his eye.

I ask no more. The slender drooping grace
Of stem and blade seen thus obliquely clear
Suffice me while the moments interlace
To minutes and the minutes to a year.

The centuries soon pass, and, while I live,
The world, which without me were but a dream,
Its changing image to my mind shall give,—
One image and one aspect of its scheme.

THE WORLD-SPIRIT

LIKE soundless summer lightning seen afar,
A halo o'er the grave of all mankind,
O undefinèd dream-embosomed star,
O charm of human love and sorrow twined :

Far, far away beyond the world's bright streams,
Over the ruined spaces of the lands,
Thy beauty, floating slowly, ever seems
To shine most glorious ; then from out our hands

To fade and vanish, evermore to be
Our sorrow, our sweet longing sadly borne,
Our incommunicable mystery
Shrined in the soul's long night before the morn.

Ah ! in the far fled days, how fair the sun
Fell sloping o'er the green flax by the Nile,
Kissed the slow water's breast, and glancing shone
Where laboured men and maidens, with a smile

Cheating the laggard hours ; o'er them the doves
Sailed high in evening blue ; the river-wheel
Sang, and was still ; and lamps of many loves
Were lit in hearts, long dead to woe or weal.

And, where a shady headland cleaves the light
That like a silver swan floats o'er the deep
Dark purple-stained Ægean, oft the height
Felt from of old some poet-soul upleap,

As in the womb a child before its birth,
Foreboding higher life. Of old, as now,
Smiling the calm sea slept, and woke with mirth
To kiss the strand, and slept again below.

So, without end, o'er Athens' god-crowned steep
Or round the shattered bases of great Rome,
Fleeting and passing, as in dreamful sleep,
The shadow-peopled ages go and come :

Sounds of a far-awakened multitude,
With cry of countless voices intertwined,
Harsh strife and stormy roar of battle rude,
Labour and peaceful arts and growth of mind.

And yet, o'er all, the One through many seen,
The phantom Presence moving without fail,
Sweet sense of closelinked life and passion keen
As of the grass waving before the gale.

What art Thou, O that wast and art to be?
Ye forms that once through shady forest-glade
Or golden light-flood wandered lovingly,
What are ye? Nay, though all the past do fade

Ye are not therefore perished, ye whom erst
The eternal Spirit struck with quick desire,
And led and beckoned onward till the first
Slow spark of life became a flaming fire.

Ye are not therefore perished: for behold
To-day ye move about us, and the same
Dark murmur of the past is forward rolled
Another age, and grows with louder fame

Unto the morrow: newer ways are ours,
New thoughts, new fancies, and we deem our lives
New-fashioned in a mould of vaster powers;
But as of old with flesh the spirit strives,

And we but head the strife. Soon shall the song
That rolls all down the ages blend its voice
With our weak utterance and make us strong;
That we, borne forward still, may still rejoice

Fronting the wave of change. Thou who alone
Changeless remainest, O most mighty Soul,
Hear us before we vanish! O make known
Thyself in us, us in thy living whole.

TO A FRIEND

FAIR friend, of the sweet hours that are no more,
Canst thou not charm from chambers of the Past
Those happy days of old, the summer wore
Like roses in her emerald zone set fast ?
The dawn returns o'er ocean-meadows blue,
And still the moon in ancient splendour glows ;
Alas, the mortal mind no magic knows
To render back the joys that once it knew.

Ah me ! that day we sat, two souls in one,
Couched in a rocky vale, the summer hours,
And heard in trance the murmurous waters run,
And saw the sunbeam sleep amid the flowers.
A mighty boulder, cloven from the steep,
Cast on the meadow-green its silent shade,
Where we our pleasant rest together made
Till day dipped downwards on the fields of sleep.

From noon till eve the mountain shadows wheeled
And slid from slope to slope and cleft the air,
The hollow vale with laughing light was filled,
Like sunny wine that brims a flagon fair.
The barren crags gleamed moist with heavenly dew,
Forthstreaming from a thousand rills of snow
And dripping dark through mountain halls below
Or leaping with the cataract into view.

The clouds rode overhead, as in a dream,
Piled high in shifting splendour grandly calm,
Until, by magic moved, on us did seem
To fall delicious sleep, like some sweet balm
That steeps the soul in memories divine ;
And Fancy, soaring high on wings of Love,
Held revel in the heaven of hope above,
Where dawned the daystar of my life and thine.

So were the happy hours that were ; but now
Only sad echoes of sweet voices heard—
Visions that flit along the rugged brow
Of that broad-featured past : like some swift bird

That touching slowly stirs a sleeping flood,
And while its broad face brightens into smiles
Is past already westward many miles,
To where the red sun sinks in fire and blood.

So pass the years, and ever in the past
Old Nature smiles at us frail houseless things ;
And if in love or in derision vast
Men scarcely know ; alone thy memory brings
To me a hope that cannot fail : a calm
That spreads where else despair : for in thy soul
I see the mould of Nature's mirrored whole—
One love, like thine, to shield mankind from harm.

1871.

BY THE MOUTH OF THE ARNO

HERE, where the crawling river seaward sets,
And riverward the sea, about a land
Laid under heaven in lonely flats of sand
Saltblackened, where the sluggish water frets
Its margin till marsh-deltas interlace
In reedy desolation ; on each hand
The long gray grasses shiver in their grace
Through sun and shadow, till salt winds deface,
Their wasted beauty ; here—by such a strand—
Pale Shelley passed, and so his course did keep
To sail Death's unexplored and open deep.



AS ROUND A LIGHTHOUSE

TO —

As round a lighthouse swept of sea and air
The waves plunge many fathom deep, and flow
Unresting o'er the rocky base below,
And glimmer shifting in the fitful glare ;
So great unrest about thy heart doth go,
So deep a flood of turbulent despair.

Stand true, O tender heart and strong, stand true :
For I, who steer alone across the deep,
By thee, unknown of thee, my course must keep
O'er the foam-crested fields for ever new ;
And thou, alone, unknowing, on the steep,
Must watch the waves with ruin all bestrew.

Not overnear to thee my course may run;
Yet pray I, somewhere on the bitter tide
Thy beam the shuddering night for me divide,
And show the heart-red splendour of thy sun
Reorient with delight upon the wide
Waters of gloomy death when life is done.

1871.

THE COMPLAINT OF JOB

CHAP. III

O PERISH the day I was born, and the night when
my mother conceived ;
Let that day be darkness, let God regard it no
more from on high ;
Let fear fright it back to the gloom, and let it no
more be reprieved
From the shadowy challenge of death and clouds
that about it lie.

O let it no more rejoice with the light-footed days
of the year,
Let the pale moon know it no more, let it not
be reckoned as one ;
O curse it all ye that curse the day ! let that night
be dear
To them that pray to the Dragon that preys on
the light of the Sun.

Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark : let
it long for the day,
And know it not, nor behold the fragrant eyelids
of morn,
Since it shut not the doors of the womb when my
mother in travail lay,
Nor hid mine eyes from the dawning light of sorrow
and scorn.

Why died I not from the womb, nor gave life back
to the deep ?

O why was I nursed on the knee, and suckled so
well at the breast ?

For now should I long have lain in quiet and folded
in sleep,

And gathered of old to the great assembly of them
that rest :

With judges and kings of earth in their pyramid-
sepulchres lone,

With mighty princes that stuffed their tombs
with treasures of worth ;

THE COMPLAINT OF JOB

91

So had I not been ; so had I sweet peace and nothingness known,
As infants that never saw light, as a hidden untimely birth.

Ah ! there do the wicked cease from troubling, the weary rest ;
The prisoners rest together, they hear not the tyrant's word.
Both small and great are there, the oppressor with the opprest ;
But the small man hath not fear, the servant is free from his lord.

O wherefore is sweet life given to a soul in bitterness clad ?
And wherefore light unto him whom sorrow and darkness hold ?
Who waiteth for death all day, and seeing the grave is glad ;
But finds it not though he dig for it more than treasures of gold.

O wherefore light unto him whose way is circled
with gloom,

Whom God hath girt with a hedge, that he cannot
or see or think ?

O wherefore light unto me, or meat for my life, to
whom

Sighing comes sooner than bread and weeping
quicker than drink ?

For even all things that I feared have alighted on
me from the air ;

I have nought of rest, or peace or quiet, but trouble
is there.

June, 1870.

THE EVERNEW

I WALK as one who, walking through the night
From village unto village far withdrawn,
Sees here and there a light and men who wake
With confused murmur growing unto dawn.

And suddenly the birds start into song,
And cart-wheels creak along the flinty ways,
And men are in the field, and lights are out,
While the first sunbeam fills the air with praise.

So louder, as I wander through the world,
Sounds that glad anthem of the glimmering day,
And lamps of men that grope within the dark
Flash quick and quicker through the morning grey,

Ere they grow dim. O glance a thousandwise
Through cold airs wreathing round my brow,
Ye heralds of a sun, before whose face,
The whiles ye fade, men hasten forth to bow.



ON A CRUCIFIX

IN THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN LATERAN, ROME

STILL, still they crucify thee, O great Christ.

They took thee from thy cross on Calvary,
And nailed thee in a splendid place unpriced
Of malachite and gold and porphyry.

They counted all the wounds thy body bore,

They measured all the hours of misery,
On spear and reed and sponge they set great store :
Still, still they crucify thee, gentle Christ.

They used thy name, because thou wast so meek,

To be the watchword of all godless pride ;
Because thou wast so gracious to the weak,

They held thy flaming cross up far and wide,
A curse and terror in the common street

To poor and ignorant and world-untried,
And then they came and crouched and kissed thy feet,
With folded hands and lips slavish and sleek.

Still, still they crucify thee, who didst say
 Suffer the little ones to come to me,
Whose heart with love beguiled the beaten way,
 And made all men behold thee joyfully ;
For now they wave away the vulgar crowd,
 No simple child of man may come nigh thee :
With obscure rites and incantations loud
They crucify thy love fresh every day.

Once, where the churches offer stones for bread,
 And in their Holy Place call darkness light,
Thy sun-like truth-revealing presence shed
 Shame on each false and Pharisaic rite :
Till, as thy lustre more intensely shone,
 They took thee from thy chosen lowly site,
And set thee for their own especial sun,
And called thee by the name of Church's Head.

And now, when in an aisle loud trumpets bray,
 And facing thee the priests go to and fro,
And, distanced off, the kneeling people pray
 And breathe thy name in trembling accents low :

High o'er the incense and the altar cloud,
Afar, and folded in thine own great woe,
Alone, thy head in deep dejection bowed,
Great Christ, they crucify thee every day.

Thy face is turned aside from all that scene,
Thine eyes are weary of their age-long gaze,
Thy frame is worn, thy shrunken limbs grow lean,
Thou seem'st to tremble at the song of praise ;
For here, and in thy name, the evil word,
The ban, the curse, and damning pious phrase,
Century after century were heard,
Christ, as if thou their Counsellor hadst been.

So long ? These twice ten hundred years, O Christ ?
Hath no one yet come near to lift thee down ?
Hath no one yet thy holy spirit priced
Above the three nails and the thorny crown ?
Thy seamless robe the Roman soldiers took,
But these have woven thee another gown
Of all thy bitter shame and sharp rebuke
Wherein to crucify thee still, great Christ.

Slowly the days run on, the time is long,
The kneeling generations come and go,
Thy word is to them as an empty gong,
They look upon thee, but they do not know.
Thine arms, wide-spread for all the world's embrace,
Are empty evermore of friend or foe,
Still, still set stiff and rigid in their place,
And straightened back from love with rivets strong.

Ah, surely in the seeming endless years
Some momentary glance hath gladdened thee,
Some smile of recognition reached through tears
Hath shed light on thy later Calvary.
Yet is thy love more like a thing untold,
To stay and suffer still so patiently,
By suffering to overcome the cold
Heart of estrangement of thy loved compeers.

And now, the end, what is it? For each day
The magic ceremonious circle, drawn
Betwixt thee and the people, doth betray
Less room for love and more for serge and lawn;

The world grows weary seeking thee in vain,

And leaves thee to the priests, who self withdrawn
In secret pride find popular disdain,
And painful desolation and dismay.

The Papal pride has triumphed : it has set
Itself for thee. The world has turned away.
The Papal pride has fallen. Wilt thou yet
Remain to lead us in this later day ?
Or will thy name, as something that is not,
Pass from the ears of men unlearmed to pray,
Thy centuries of suffering forgot,
Thy love to men for evermore unmet ?

Ah ! greater is thy love than this, great Christ.
Thou givest, but then askest not again.
And though our wayward worship be enticed
To other shrines, thy spirit shall remain,
Unknown, to breathe upon us purer life,
Refine us with the flame of earthly pain,
Until our hearts with thine no more at strife,
We learn how not to crucify thee, Christ.

THE GREAT PEEPSHOW

I

WALK up! walk up! This way to see the world!
Scant time allowed, must make the best of it:
Seventy years or so. your hair'll be curled
Before that, though, with two or three sights fit
To set your eyes wide open—if you've wit,
That is to say, to win in the great strife
For bare existence 'gainst each brother chit—
To keep one eye upon the slide of life,
As 'twere an instant, ere death hood you with his
coif.

II

Walk up! walk up! Well, you're a stranger
now;
But that won't last. It's excellent rare fun
Up here; but as we've much to see, allow
Me to begin at once. Now, there's the Sun.

Where you come from I doubt that there was one
Or aught to match it; 'tis too far to touch,
But has its use, natheless, which is to run
From end to end of heaven, and give rays such
As may suffice to warm and light our earthly
hutch.

III

It shines by day and is obscured at night—
A capital arrangement, such as I
Should have suggested if the Infinite
Had asked my counsel. If you ask me why,
'Tis clear 'twould not have suited men to lie
Abed with sun full-orbed at midnight blaze
And work their days by gaslight. We descry
Throughout these things the providential ways,
And are prepared in all to render them due
praise.

IV

Walk up! walk up! There's plenty more to see
By this said sun's rays—simple and sublime.
The world's a show which is, you'll all agree,
The greatest ever advertised in rhyme,—

THE GREAT PEEPSHOW

101

We've had the management of it some time
And can explain it fully ;—and to-day
'Tis not too much to say 'tis in its prime ;
Admission free—that is, if you obey
Our fatherly direction, there is nought to pay.

V

Move with the rest, and do not stop to gaze
Too long or closely. All is very good :
So the Creator said—in some amaze
At his own skill. Besides, in any mood,
Doubting or not, 'tis deemed a little rude
To look a gift-horse in the mouth. Move on :
And thank your planets—as indeed you should—
That you have got such good advice to con,
For which the world were worthy visiting, alone.

VI

Your eyes are caught at first by empty shows—
Bright colours, smiling faces, forms of grace.
To chase gold butterflies by green hedgerows,
To play regardless both of time and space

In unrestricted freedom, and to race
Propriety and prudence out of breath,
Seem pleasant and surprisingly in place
In this fair world where, as the preacher saith,
What profits he that works in that he laboureth ?

VII

But look around you, and you'll soon perceive
Your judgment is at fault, and, once for all,
'Tis best surrender freedom and not grieve,
But bend your neck demurely to the thrall—
Remembering the weak *must* take the wall.
And get by rote, if not by heart, the themes
Which age and ancient custom learning call,
And leave enthusiastic youthful dreams,
To labour for what is and not for that which
seems.

VIII

Such labour profits. Since it pleased the Lord
To shut us out of Paradise, the sweat
Of each man's brow alone secures reward
(His or another's) ; and we need not fret

The bargain's just, for if we do not get
Interest, we get profits, which are more.
Life's interest is Nature's secret, set
In untrod plains, and if all pleasant lore
Is there, Knowledge and Life,—an Eden-land
whereo'er

IX

The sun of freedom shines—still, here is gold,
Which, after all, surpasses any sun ·
For without light were nothing to behold,
But without this is nothing to be done.
Therefore seek first for gold, and therefore shun
Unthrifty habits or excessive vice :
Honesty's best policy in the long run,
Dishonour ruins credit in a trice,
And virtue, being its own reward, thus pays you twice.

X

Yet all with moderation. We, who came
Into the world and learned our lesson flush
Ere you were thought of, have the prior claim
In law as well as profits. Do not push !

As if gold were the very flaming bush.
Order ! If there's not room, why, some must wait ;
First comers first : 'tis just. And I'll not blush
To say I've tarried yearlong for a great
Opening which now the due rotation brings—though
late.

XI

Nay, do not push. Ah ! Vengeance on you all !
'Tis lost. What greediness !—a vulgar crowd
Pressing and trampling forward—I shall fall.
Help ! hear me ! Here is hard cash : I'm not proud.
In vain. All lost. Before my eyes a cloud
Hides the great show, the scene becomes obscure.
I could have wished that chance had been allowed ;
But no, the risk of limb outweighed the lure,—
And, taking all in all, the show's a little poor.

XII

Adieu. See how they fight ! So has it been
Since the beginning, as if unaware
The panorama's but a shifting scene,
And all its wonders only empty air.

Hear me, my friends. Believe me that I bear
No grudge against you, but would have you know,
For your own good, the lust of gold's a snare.
The world's no shop, but only a peepshow :
What's seen or handled you surrender when you go.

XIII.

Carry him out ! more room ! come up behind !
One peephole vacant ! now the show's at height.
Strange, that our predecessors—though not blind—
Ne'er fully saw or understood the sight,
Withal so anxious to display their light
For our illumination ! But away :
Our time for all such questioning is quite
Too limited. Enough, while yet 'tis day,
To use the precious hours. Let night come when it
may.

FLORENCE, 1873

THE FELLOWSHIP OF HUMANITY

As one who, late at eve returning home
Under the stars, hears on the common road
A fellow-footstep fall, and sees one come
Dimly, he knows not whom, nor can forebode :

But cries to him 'God speed thee,' and is glad
Hearing his restful answer through the night,
And dreams of love, and though his heart be sad
Feels darkly some strange instinct of delight ;

So I to thee. If on this earthly way
Our paths had lain together, I perchance
In the sweet sunlight had beheld thy day
And known thee as thou art—as in a trance,—

And loved thee, and thou me. But seeing now
Sad night compels us, and our way is won
Through ignorance and blindness to the brow
Of that fair mountain of the morning Sun

THE FELLOWSHIP OF HUMANITY 107

Whence Truth is manifest, let us remain
In word and action strangers, yet in heart
One and well-known by every joy and pain
That makes divine our little human part.

1872.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF SUFFERING

O WEARY child of man, O mortal friend,
Afar, unseen, by road or river-bend,
By mountain, plain, or city, still the same,
Human, unfriended, with the piercing flame
Of endless sorrow in thine aching heart :
Hear me, for unto thee my spirit yearns ;
Touch me, behold me, where the twilight turns,
Uplifting white arms to the tireless morn :
Hear me, for in thy torment I am torn ;
Hear me, for in thy passion I have part.

O child, O child, how sadly sang the world
Its old old song of keen cold carelessness,
How blindly blew the wind of loneliness
About thy soul in frozen garments furled ;
How with pale speechless lips and wan didst pace
Crushing beneath thy days that deadly feud ;
How to the bitter wall didst turn thy face,
Glad from the glances of the multitude.

Ah ! here or there ; the same sad song of woe,
More desolate than world-despair or death,
The cry of souls the cruel sun severeth,
The moan of love to madness smitten low.
Ah, here or there ; the same sad end of things,
The same fond fruitless ineffectual life,
High-feathered hope and passionate pulse of wings,
Chill sorrow, failure, and despairing strife.

Behold, beyond the mountains of the West,
Where sparkle white domes of the purple hills,
The light of evening Earth's broad bosom fills
And like a golden dove broods o'er her breast,
And fades, afar—for you and me, afar,—
Shared token of our common deep desire,
Which fadeth not, but like a beacon-star
Devours the darkness of our hearts with fire.

THE ANGEL OF DEATH—AND LIFE

I CALL thee in all hours of life and death :
Friend, whom the days hide and the months and
years

Darken before my face : I call and cry
Still, as of old time, ere the morning star
Mounts in the moonlit heavens ; and still, ere dawn
Visits the vale of sleep, I call to thee.

Friend, like a stranger loved and known before,
Or brother long forgot, with intricate
World-written countenance, obscure to read,
Yet flashing ancient meanings : thou, for whom,
Morning and night, with ever-new desire,
I, waiting, watch without the gates of Time,
If haply at length thy vagrant feet efface
The way of our estrangement ; yea, O thou,
Who in that way's delay decipherest
These words of my great need, I call to Thee.

THE ANGEL OF DEATH—AND LIFE 111

O wilt thou hear me: know that night by
night

I dwell beside thee, and before the dawn
Touch thy loved forehead with my lips, and fill
With joy each hour of waking. Evernear
I gaze upon thee as thou goest forth
To each day's due encounter; step by step,
And hour by hour each stroke of all thy work
Wears out the world to more transparency
Between us. Even now the flinty way,
Flaming beneath thy feet, is grown like glass;
My glance is on thee from the well-turned field,
The mill, the net, the loom, and woven stuff,
From desk and counter and rock-quarried gold,
Waste seas and stormbeat headlands, and from
all

The faces of thine enemies in the fight—
Strike home: the stroke is fair for me and thee.
Nay, from these words I spring to meet thy soul,
Which else were lonely in the world of men;
O take them as the token of a love
Within, without thee, Lord and minister,
Unknown, of all thy actions, until death
Reveal it, visual, thine, the perfect life.

Yea, now I call to Love that is in thee,
And cry, as one that sees her shadow pass
And the lamp flash, waiting without the house
For his fair one at the window : O come forth,
That I may see thee as thou art, and hear
Thy hidden thought, and hold thy very self
In presence undisturbed. Thou are descried :
Thy light is beauty and cannot be hid ;
But, through the tangle of frail purposes
That fringe the lattice windows of thy life,
Shines to perpetual promise. Fear thou not.
Ay, though I come clad grimly as for war,
In brazen heat or scaly northern cold,
By rock or river, famine, hatred, fire ;
Though I assail thee at the cannon's mouth,
Or drag thee down to listless years of pain,
Arise thou, and with forehead unabashed
Come forth, and so confront me. In that day,
Thine eyes, beholding mine, within their depths
Shall see, resurgent from the past, all forms
Of long-lost joy and lovely memory,
All faces and fair smiles of time, set forth
And forward in the future ; all else fled.
O stand and conquer so : for see, I touch

THE ANGEL OF DEATH—AND LIFE 113

Thee through this outer world, in the hot Sun
I slay thee with my lips, all day to thee
I whisper in the Light, and to myself
Desirous draw thee in the Lightning flash
Arrayed in death. Arise and vanquish me :
Grasp firm my tangled hair, brandish thy sword,
Breathe heavily thy hot breath in my ears,
And I will yield ; and thou shalt know that Love
Stands ever by thy side through Life and Death,
Signs allegiance of a thousand hearts
That still are One.

O hear my voice once more.
I am with thee. Rise up, thy duty calls ;
Pass down into the world ; I am with thee.

FLORENCE, 1873.

SONNETS

I

GENOA

WHERE Genoa spreads white arms crescent-wise,
Her feet o'er well-packed bale and polished spar
Step on the quay with men of every star.
Her heart stays with her people ; but her eyes
From those high garden-terraces devise
New realms of peaceful conquest, where afar
Ocean's white horses at the harbour-bar
Wait ever for their rider to arise.

Here boy Columbus stood, and o'er the blue
Immeasurable fields imagined new.
Here young Mazzini, while for men he yearned,
Another world within their eyes discerned—
The one Republic without place or date.
So both for men lived,—and died execrate.

January, 1873

II

BEETHOVEN

BETWIXT the actual and unseen, alone,
Companionless, deaf, in dread solitude
Of soul amid the faithless multitude,
He lived, and fought with life, and held his own ;
Knew poverty, and shame which is not shown,
Pride, doubt, and secret heart-despair of good,—
Insolent praise of men and petty feud :
Yet fell not from his purpose, framed and known.

For, as a lonely watcher of the night,
When all men sleep, sees the tumultuous stars
Move forward from the deep in squadrons bright,
And notes them, he through this life's prison bars
Heard all night long the spheric music clear
Beat on his heart,—and lived that men might hear.

January, 1873.

III

IN MORTEM. F. D. MAURICE

So day by day my life, thus nearer drawn
Down the dark avenues unto the dawn,
Cries to Thee : O Lord, Lord of life and death,
Whom from our gaze the sad night sundereth,
Reveal Thyself ; be unto us no more
A darkly-felt thick darkness by the shore ;
But like the wind, that wingeth cold and clear
Before the dawn by meadow-land and mere,
Blow on us ; scatter from our sickly brains
The feverish fancies that ill conscience feigns ;
Raise us to stand like men to meet the strife,
Fearless and grand, because within thy life
Our lives are hidden,—as is his to-day,
Thy servant who from sight hath passed away.

April, 1872.

IV

WILLIAM SMITH

(AUTHOR OF "THORNDALE," ETC.)

SUCH courage in so sensitive a frame
Had given the world rebuke, but that it came
In such light exquisite companionship
Of gentle glance and laughter-loving lip
That few, beholding, could forebode the force
Wherewith that inward current kept its course
In wave-like large emotion, calm and free,
Towards Truth, the high compelling deity.

So when, obedient to the heavenly guide,
Night-long the sea with stedfast-flowing tide
Rises along the land and searches o'er
Each bay and inlet of its bounding shore,
The moving goddess doth her empire trace
In lines of silver laughter on its face.



V

INSCRIBED ON A GRAVE

TO THE READER

O CHILD of light and shadow: though I pass,
The mountains and the plains where we two played
Our part of earthly pleasance still are laid
Out in the open world of sun and grass,—
For thy fruition. Not in stone or brass
Seek any sign of me. Let no tear braid
Thy light-fringed lids because my path is made
Beyond the bounds thy sight cannot surpass.
Turn thee again unto the sunlit plain,
Let all pure influences of the air
And sweet sad fellowship of mortal pain
Wreathe round thy head immortal fancies fair.
Where'er suns rise on men or late moons wane,
I leave thee at this stone to meet thee there.

ROME, 1873.

VI

DEATH

SINCE, small or great, and every man on earth,
Must know thee at the last, thy lonely gloom
Is bright with something of diviner birth—
The lamp of human love, that o'er our doom
Sheds undivided radiance. For in this
Our modern world of finely graded life,
The soul is nursed knowing nothing of the bliss
Of sorrow borne, since human. In this strife
Of complex individual interests
Poor man and princely, side by side, share not
One pain or passion of a common lot,
Till death, more liberal than life, invests
All men alike in his wide winding-sheet,
And in that suit of sorrow makes them meet.



VII

SINCE, in thine hour of sorrow, unto thee
Came sweet remembrance of the summer sea
And one who sat beside it—in his eyes
The far-off thought of sea and summer skies.
Since in thine heart the visionary gleam
Of one half-wasted life, more like a dream,
Pale in its pleading, stood to be the sign
Of Love, as Love is, passionate, divine:
Ah! since in all this world no fuller sound
Than my faint spirit's utterance was found
Bidding thee cherish hope: so let it be.
Behold, beyond the summer and the sea
I utter not myself, but am His voice
Who bids all Nature live, and thee rejoice.

* * *

VIII

SEVERANCE

My life thy life unto itself doth fold
Closer than death. My soul clasps all of thine,
As in the bud rose-petals intertwine
Before the light divides them. I behold
Deep in the mystic shadow-caverns shine
Thine image on the fire-fed sources cold
Whereby my spirit dwells ; and with the old
Foreboding unforgotten, dream divine,
Thou dost disturb me. Yet the dim-lit day
Dawns down between us, staring face to face,
Strange as the stormy Atlantic , with swift pace
We tread the track which sets our steps astray ;
Thy lips are mute ; mine move not ; evermore
I wait and wearily knock at Death's dark door.

1872.

IX

IT SHALL BE

It shall be. Although far away the sound
Dies in the infinite silence of the sky,
Although obscure, and hid in the profound,
Our days stream outwards, onwards, and pass by.

It shall be. Behold a new world is made
Out of the old, and the old dieth not ;
For though the mountain-forms and flowers fade,
Ageless remains the far-informing Thought.

Ah ! when this troublous dream and mortal sleep
Fades from our eyelids, and the end is near,
Down through the spaceless void and starry steep
Instinct with Love the dreaming soul shall hear
One whispered word ; and all the past shall be
Up-gathered into Love's eternity.

* * *

X

WALDSTEIN SONATA. BEETHOVEN

O CHANGELESS in thy beauty, stedfast, strong,
Exultant in the calm of victory,
A mighty poet flung thee forth, to be
A part of Nature. So that I, thus long
Listening to thy majestic voices, dream
Of some vast snow-veiled mountain far away,
Whose front is crimson fire at orient day ;
Where in the dark Dian's silver lances gleam ;
Where shadows of the tireless storm-wreathed mist
Move on in changeless interchange ; where call
Clamorous echoes of the waterfall
From crag to crag ; whom Night alone hath kissed,
And everlasting silence, and the far
Glimmering magic of the Morning star.

November, 1869.

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